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Neglected Arabia



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THE ARABIAN MISSION

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Missionary Letters and News from Arabia.

July-September, 1902.

SIX MONTHS IN BAHREIN DISPENSARY.

S. J. THOMS, M. D.

I wonder if you would like to hear of some of the hindrances and discouragements we have found in our work during the first six months of this year, or if you would rather hear only the bright side. Of course, the fact that we are soon to have a hospital in which to expand our work is such an encouragement that we almost forget our trials, but even in this there are features that discourage, such as the extreme difficulty of securing assistants.

When we came here, two years ago, the Dispenser refused to leave Busrah and come to Bahrein. Many of the native Christians talk a great deal about the work of the Lord but fail us when asked to endure hardships even when only asked to live away from their friends for a time. There may be some confusion as to who these native Christians are, as they are not native converts as in China, but Armenian and Chaldean Christians, upon whom we depend for our assistants. Our hearts were made glad in the winter by the prospect of getting a trained Christian dispenser from Bagdad. He came to us in the spring but when the heat of the summer came with its annoyances, he made up his mind that the Lord did not need him in Bahrein, and he returned to his friends. Even the bait of increased pay did not tempt him. From the beginning of the summer until now I have only had the aid of a sixteen year old boy who does not compare in quickness and usefulness with boys of that age at home. However, about 7,000 patients were treated and forty-one operations under anaesthetic were performed. This does not exactly mean the full number of treatments given as many a patient receives simultaneously, three or four treatments. He may have

a tooth pulled, an ulcer dressed, an eye treated, and be given a tonic besides, but only one patient is recorded.

Prejudice is rapidly melting away and the sheikhs themselves are beginning to consider it quite the thing to be treated by the Mission doctor.

The Word has been faithfully preached each morning, generally by Mr. Zwemer, with increasing attention and apparent interest if not conviction. The patients often assent to the truth of the words they hear but I am afraid that much of the ground that is not stony is very shallow.

We have been having a great run of ear cases among the pearl divers from all parts of the gulf, who almost invariably come with their ears packed full of grease and salt which has to be cleaned out before the trouble can be treated or even diagnosed.

The other day a patient came with a peculiar combination of troubles. His tooth ached, and instead of coming to have it pulled he went to a Mullah who wrote some magic words on a paper, rolled it up and put it into his ear. This slipped in so far that he could not remove it but the tooth-ache was not benefitted, so he came to see what we could do for him. I removed the paper, then the tooth, and then Mr. Zwemer spoke of the foolishness of charms, using the man and the circumstances as an example.

We are disappointed that there does not seem to be a doctor ready to be sent out this fall, for another doctor will be necessary if the order is to advance (not retreat). Then, too, he should have two years of uninterrupted language study before taking active charge of work, and this would not be possible even if he were coming out this fall, as vacations and furloughs will be necessary before this could be accomplished and he take up the work. Where are the members of Volunteer bands who graduated last year and this year and have not gone out? Are they not honoring their pledges?

I am not saying much, as the next number is to be a hospital number and you will hear all about it then. The natives cannot believe that this new house which is so much better than the Mission House is to be used only for sick Arabs and not for us to live in. Even though they have been told so often that it is entirely their house, they persist in believing that at least the Doctor

will live in it and allow sick people to sleep in the rooms he does not need.

It made our hearts glad to hear of the large box of useful things that certain ladies of the church are sending out for the hospital. If you knew how such thoughtful aid cheered our hearts and encouraged us I am sure more would follow.

A TOUR AMONG THE OUTSTATIONS.

REV. F. J. BARNY.

An idea of the size of the field assigned to the missionaries in Busrah may be obtained from the statement that I covered a distance of nearly a thousand miles, the route making a rough triangle containing about one-half of the field. Ten days were spent on the road and eight at towns on the way. The tour has been made and described before so I need not spend time in description. The plan was that Dr. Worrall and I should make a combined tour—he taking his appliances for treatment and I a stock of Scriptures. We started together on the Turkish steamer, paying double the fare that we would on the English one for privileges that existed merely on paper, but we gained our object of having some time at Amara, until the English steamer came along which would take us much more quickly to our next stopping place. At Amara Dr. Worrall received a telegram recalling him on account of his wife's illness, so we parted. At a point two-thirds of the way to Baghdad I left the steamer, and the rest of the way—six days' journey—was made in open boats. The river marked *Shatt el Hai* on the maps, which leaves the Tigris at this point, is merely an overflow at the time the Tigris rises, and is at first a respectable stream, but by the time it reaches the Euphrates it is a mere ditch. This part of the tour was through

A DESOLATE LAND

and was trying. The hot sun by day, and the dews and mosquitoes at night, are hardly worth mentioning as they are things to be expected; but to be amidst such desolation, to hear accounts of oppression, and constantly to have the evidences of it before one's eyes, make one sick at heart long before the end is reached. There are three towns on the *Shatt el Hai* once prosperous but

now their bazaars are half closed. And many were the hamlets that we passed in ruins and deserted. The country used to be one wheat and rice field. Two successive dry seasons account for some of the ruin, and the Turkish tax-collector for the rest. Now there is no cultivation to speak of, since most of the cultivators have gone elsewhere. I stopped at each of the towns and got some idea of them, helpful in directing tours of the colporters in these regions. At each place some portions of Scripture were sold, usually penny Gospels, since the people could not afford to spend



DAY BREAK IN MUSCAT.

more. All this poverty makes it the more difficult to sell, where it is already difficult, on account of the prejudices of the people who are all Shiah, and fanatical ones at that. At one of the towns we found and were entertained by a Christian who is

AN AGED SCHOLAR.

When Mr. Wiersum made the same tour over a year ago he was entertained by the same man, and on departing he asked him what he would most like to have, and he said a complete Bible,

which Mr. Wiersum gave him gladly. He could not read then, but nothing daunted, though a man of more than sixty years, he secured an alphabet card and learned the letters, and began to spell out the words, and persisted so that now he can read nicely. It was beautiful to see the reverent way in which he handled the Holy Book, and to see the expression of joy when we read from it. He is a lonely man without family or friends, but he says he does not feel lonely any more when he comes home from his work as the Book is his companion. Would that there were more of such zeal to learn what God's message is, and such reverence for it, especially among "The People of the Book."

AT NASARIYEH

We had a longer stay than any of the other places. The shop here had been closed by the authorities on the complaint of some fanatic, but we were glad to find little, if any, traces of opposition. The shop was much frequented—more so than when I had been there previously, and the colporter was well spoken of. I had a Sunday in the place and held a service, and it was a remarkable audience that I had. There were fourteen present—all the Christians of the place, representing four different churches, viz: The Armenian, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic, the colporter and a family of Protestants making the fourth. We are the only ordained representatives of the church who ever visit the place, so that these people without a shepherd were glad to attend even a Protestant service. I baptized two children on this occasion. I conclude this letter with the statement of

A NEED

that impressed me much. The Mission has always expected that the Out-stations would develop so that missionaries could profitably be stationed at them. The time has come when the Mission must face this problem, must keep pace with opportunity. There is no opposition now, everywhere there was friendly greeting and there is a great deal of inquiry which ought to be taken advantage of. The inquiry is not always sympathetic or even intelligent, but even if it is nothing more than the result of curiosity it is a long stage ahead of the indifference of the years gone by. The Mission cannot now set anyone aside for this work as we are barely enough

for our three stations, but we constantly bring *this* need to God in prayer and trust that he will move His church to send the laborers.

LAY-PREACHING IN THE WOMEN'S DISPENSARY.

AMY E. ZWEMER.

These summer mornings men and women gather early at the dispensary, the women in their little room and the men on seats in the porch and outside. Every morning, with few exceptions, a preaching and prayer service is held for the two gatherings, men and women. Usually the service for the men is finished before the reading to the women commences; the number of women present at the preaching varies from twelve to thirty, the last number is almost too many to speak to comfortably in the very small room at present occupied. However, we are nearly always encouraged by the attention given to the reading by part of the audience at least; those who have been coming for several mornings take upon themselves to silence those who, through indifference or anxiety, talk during reading and prayer. A few of the women who come are able to read and their attention is more easily kept than that of those who are altogether unlearned. Theology and controversy would be out of place here, for the women very nearly resemble, what they very often call themselves, "animals," therefore our talks are of the simplest kind, we try to make some word stay in their memories to come back, perhaps, after many days. The portion of Scripture read must be put into village-Arabic, for many of the words in the Arabic Bible are neither known nor understood by the common people. The Beatitudes furnish material for many talks; the "Sermon on the Mount" is more often used, I think, than any other part. "The Salt and Light" they seem to appreciate very much; other subjects are "The right way to pray," "The true *fast*," "Treasure in Heaven," "God's provision for those who first of all seek His kingdom and righteousness," "The two houses—whose foundations are rock and sand." This last seems to be more easily understood than the other parables. Sometimes the passage is taken from 1 John 1. "The Blood that cleanses from all sin." Several of the Psalms are also used. The same talk is often repeated at intervals for

several reasons; the "lay preachers" have not the whole vocabulary of the Arabic Scriptures at their command; many evangelistic addresses suitable for people in the homeland would not be understood here, and repetition sometimes makes an impression. We always have prayer and some of the women have advanced so far as to say Amen; but as yet they do not rise up and join in prayer—perhaps it is too much to ask of them as yet. Occasionally a Gospel is asked for and given, once or twice they have been returned after reading. One woman asked for the whole Bible, which I gave her; she brought it back and said she had read it through



ARAB-WOMEN WASHING CLOTHES, BAHREIN, OR
THE BAHREIN "STAR LAUNDRY."

and the words were very good. This woman belongs to a nice family, pleasant, and, apparently willing to learn. Some of the women explain to each other what is being said, others take up the last word of a sentence and repeat it; at times a sick baby or two will start crying or late comers enter and make confusion in the middle of a telling passage; then when they are settled a beginning is made again. Some women apparently think that if they do not approve they may not receive treatment, so they are fulsome in their agreement to all that is said, very often saying the wrong thing or agreeing in the wrong place, their too ready

assent proving they have not understood. But, nevertheless, with all these drawbacks, we try to believe that progress is being made surely, if slowly.

One day lately I called to see an ex-patient and found the household making preparation for the marriage of the eldest daughter, a girl of fourteen years of age, who was to be married to her cousin, a boy of eighteen years. The rooms were of ordinary mud and stone, roughly built, but the custom here on these festive occasions is to cover the walls with bright colored material; the poorer classes use cotton, the wealthy silk; the middle class apparently borrow all the silk dresses from their lady friends, and cover the walls very neatly with these. How would some of the dinner dresses of New York ladies look decorating the walls of some friend who was about to be married? The effect of the Arab costumes hung around is quite pretty in the Orient. In addition to the dresses a number of gilt framed mirrors are hung up, and on top of these colored glass balls of all sizes are hung around and greatly add to the gorgeous effect. I gave them a copy of the New Testament and Psalms, bound together, for a wedding present, and I hope it may prove a blessing to them in their new life and may be the means of Eternal life to them.

NOTES ON BUSRAH DISPENSARY WORK.

H. R. L. WORRALL, M.D.

Much has happened since our last report. Perhaps, in a way, the most important event was changing the location of the dispensary July 25. The old location was midway between Busrah City proper and the suburb village of Magam. We have long thought that if the location of the dispensary were in either place it would be better. The threatened increase of rent gave us an incentive to try a change. Our search resulted in obtaining a one-story five-room house, with a kitchen, bath-room, and a large extra closet, which may be used for storage or other purposes if desired. We are now near the bridge which connects Magam with Busrah.

The number of patients treated in the old location was 5,864, number of days of treatment 150. Daily average 39, and every

tenth day 40. June 10 was the banner day for the number treated; 115 heard the reading of Scriptures by our colporter, Micha Jaboorie; 108 were treated.

It was our misfortune that on the day of moving the dispensary our dispenser was taken ill with an attack of appendicitis. He has only recently recovered sufficiently to again do full work.

His sickness threw all the moving, treating and dispensing on my hands, this causing a great deal of extra work.

UNUSUAL WEATHER CONDITIONS.

This summer has been remarkable for its unusual weather. The North Wind lasted till a few days ago. To-day, one of the so-called "Date Ripening Days," being only one of the very few hard days we have had this summer. Even now, 9.30 P. M., a gentle breeze is blowing from the South which mitigates the heat a great deal.

Fevers however have abounded. Many deaths have occurred from this cause. Beggars and the poor would lie down on the road and say they had fever and in a few hours be picked up and carried to their last resting place. Others would say they did not feel well, go to their rooms and, failing to appear, would be found lifeless by their searching friends. The unusual weather conditions would account for it all. The people would lie down on the roofs as in former years, every indication pointing to a normal night, but the morning would find the roof and everything thereon wet with dew.

AN OPPORTUNITY.

We were unable to take advantage of an opportunity which presented itself this quarter, for which we were very sorry—a patient with dropsy whom we considered too seriously ill to come to the dispensary we promised to call upon—and on arriving we found him dwelling in one of the mat huts so common here. We were approached on every side with invitations to see the sick. It seemed too much to undertake such work either medically or for evangelistic efforts with our present staff. Our crying need is more help. They do not *want* the Bible but the *need* is great and where, oh where shall be supplied "the great need."

We may mention here our great joy in once again seeing the face and shaking the hands of our old patient, friend and persecuted brother, the Turkish soldier, who passed through Busrah some weeks ago. Our brothers at Bahrein will no doubt write at length about this man who is now with them and his own family.

One grateful patient gave for furniture, closets, benches, etc., the sum of Rs 48, about \$16, for which we were thankful because of the need of the same.

Among the operations during the quarter I would mention four. Two for cataract and two iridectomies.

One cataract case gave all the symptoms of a successful outcome from an operation, but the patient's replies were apparently incorrect, as after the operation an examination proved him blind from previous attacks of glaucoma which no operation could relieve.

In another case, cataract and central opacity of cornea, which gave but little promise of betterment by an operation, the patient went away seeing, although distinguishing the road only and men as moving trees. The iridectomies at first gave promise of great help but did not prove successful, although the patients were not made worse.

Work keeps on—operations are waiting to be done and will be done at first opportunity—patients being treated each day and many coming. We are hoping and praying for "good success," and that there may be some seed sown on good soil as well as the much which has been apparently cast upon stony and rocky ground.

NOTES ON OUR OWN WORK AND THAT OF OTHERS.

REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D. D.

In the *Illustrated Missionary News* of London, for June and July, there is a very interesting account of the first missionary journey into the north of Arabia by Rev. A. Forder of the Christian Alliance Mission. He left Jerusalem in December, 1900, and traveled with a single companion via Jericho, Es-Salt and Basham to Kaf. Thence he joined a caravan for Jowf, about seven hundred miles inland, a journey of ten days across the desert. This is a large town and Mr. Forder here disposed of more than eighty copies of the Word by sale or in exchange for

eggs and fruit. Altogether the journey, though full of hardship and trial, ended successfully. More than two hundred and fifty copies of Scripture were left in this inhospitable and almost inaccessible part of the peninsula. We very much regret that it appears that the Christian Alliance will no longer continue their work in Arabia.

The Mason Memorial Hospital will be completed by the time this reaches the reader. The corner-stone was laid on March 19th last, and appropriate dedication exercises will probably be held at our annual mission meeting, although the building will be occupied, D.V., before that time. Our next issue will be a Hospital number.

Many will remember that when the exile-soldier's family came to Bahrein three years ago, he was taken a prisoner to a distant town in Asia Minor. We were all surprised and delighted to see him safely back here after a most hazardous journey. His escape and adventures by the way were in answer to prayer. For each of those adventures gave proof of how the hand of Providence kept him out of the hands of those who sought his life. For five years he has been a professing Christian. During his exile he says he has read through the New Testament many times and his Christian character has grown strong through persecution. On Sunday, July 6th, Ameen was baptized at Bahrein. He is the first-fruits of Amara unto Christ. It would not be expedient to give the details of his escape in print at present. Another Moslem who has been an inquirer for a long time, this year openly professed the faith and naturally suffered persecution from those of his own house. He has received some instruction but although he desires baptism he is not yet quite ready for it.

In the instruction of inquirers we follow the example of the missionaries in Syria, who use the Westminster Shorter Catechism with proof texts. It seems that the Heidelberg Catechism was translated into Arabic many years ago, and an Arabic translation is mentioned by Schaff and others, but our mission has never been able to obtain a copy in order to have it reprinted or revised. Can any of the friends of the catechism, and of Arabia, put us on the track of it?

Rev. J. C. Young, M.D., of the Keith Falconer Mission, mentions the following interesting incident in their evangelistic work:

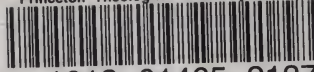
“ Every morning during the past year a service has been conducted in Arabic at 7.30. To the service the patients come ; and since the beginning of August the schoolboys have also attended, and seem interested in our message. One man that was sent down by the Sultan of Lahej to learn English became greatly interested in the gospel, and has owned himself a disciple of Jesus but fears to take the decisive step of being publicly baptized. Whether it was through fear of his becoming a baptized Christian, or for other reasons, I cannot say, but more than a month ago he was removed to El Hauta by the Sultan, whither, as soon as I have finished this report, I am about to proceed. I hope that God’s blessing may be on our meeting, and on our dealing with him, and the others, who, through him, are questioning their own faith and God’s plan of redemption in Christ the Lord.

It is only just to James Monro, Esq., C. B., of the Ranaghat Medical Mission, Bengal, to say that his pamphlet on ‘The Coran’s Testimony to the Christian’s Bible’ contributed largely to the sheikh’s conversion, and to the fact of the Bible being more largely read than it was. Indirectly, I heard that the sheikh had given the Sultan of Lahej a copy of this pamphlet, who at once ordered the Imam to prepare a reply. But when that reply was submitted to the Sultan, he said that it was no reply at all, as not a single argument had been refuted.”

The sheikh was baptized on the 11th of May last. It shows progress in overcoming prejudice to learn from the same Mission that they now have a Bible Shop in the market place, and use it with success for open-air gospel services by a native evangelist.

Two of our colporters have just returned from a tour to Sharka and Debai. They were unable to get a boat and cross over to the Arab coast from Bunder Abbas as they intended. Two quite severe earthquake shocks had alarmed the town and the people were fleeing away. Our men went by steamer to Lingah and then crossed in native boat to their destination. They had an opportunity of meeting some of those who on former occasions welcomed our message, and “planted” over one hundred and twenty portions of the Word. The people of Debai and Sharka flock in great numbers to Ras el Kheima in the heat of summer, so that the towns are only half populated until after the date-harvest and the pearl fisheries.

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